

# ARTHUR YOUNG AND THE PRESIDENT

57

GRADES: 9-12

SUBJECT: Language Arts

OBJECTIVE: Students will translate NASS data into prose for a variety of purposes.

## BACKGROUND

In 1791, President Washington received a letter from an Englishman named Arthur Young, who had written to several farmers requesting information on land values, crops, yields, livestock prices, and taxes. By personally conducting a mail survey and compiling the results, Washington was able to gather enough information to reply fully to his English correspondent. This was, in effect, the Nation's first agricultural survey.

Between September 24 and November 18, 1791, Washington sent Young three letters that provided agricultural statistics on an area extending roughly 250 miles from north to south and 100 miles from east to west. The strip ran through an area, which is today Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, where most of the young country's population lived.

Washington asked Congress to establish a National Board of Agriculture in 1776, but Congress rejected the idea at that time.

The issue wasn't raised again until 1839, when Commissioner of Patents Henry Ellsworth persuaded Congress to designate \$1,000 from the Patent Office Fund for "collecting and distributing seeds, carrying out agricultural investigations, and procuring agricultural statistics."

In 1840, the first census of agriculture collected detailed agricultural information to provide the first nationwide inventory of agricultural production.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was established by Abraham Lincoln in 1862, and its first crop report appeared in July, 1863. The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) traces its roots all the way back to 1863, when USDA estab-



VOCABULARY

yield  
survey  
cwt  
bale  
bushel

lished a Division of Statistics.

During the Civil War, USDA collected and distributed crop and livestock statistics to help farmers assess the value of the goods they produced. At that time, commodity buyers usually had more current and detailed market information than did farmers, a circumstance that often prevented farmers from getting a fair price for their goods. Producers in today's marketplace would be similarly handicapped were it not for the information provided by NASS.

NASS publishes reports covering everything about agriculture in the U.S.— production and supplies of food and fiber, prices paid and received by farmers, farm labor and wages, farm aspects of the industry. In addition, NASS' 45 State Statistical Offices publish data about many of the same topics for their individual states.

NASS publications cover a wide range of subjects, from traditional crops, such as corn and wheat, to specialties, such as mushrooms and flowers; from calves born to hogs slaughtered; from agricultural prices to land in farms.

Because of the amount of information produced by the agency, NASS has earned the title, "The Fact Finders of Agriculture."

ACTIVITY

1. Ask students how they get information to friends who they don't see every day. Record responses on the chalk board. Does anyone communicate by writing letters?
2. Share background information about the correspondence between George Washington and Englishman Arthur Young and the first agricultural surveys. Ask students where they would go to find the kind of information Arthur Young asked George Washington to provide. Why did the President of the United States think the questions were important enough to personally gather the information and reply?
3. Provide each student with the data on the following pages and a copy of the letter, a modern day version of the letter Arthur Young might have written to George Washington. Have students use the data to compose a reply. Students should cover the following topics in their letters: land value, crops, yields, and livestock prices.
4. Divide students into groups, and have each group select either a commodity or a state or region and use the data to



develop promotional brochures and posters and to make oral presentations, using technology (Power Point) when available.

#### ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Provide students with excerpts from George Washington's letters to Arthur Young and others at the end of this lesson, and have them rewrite them in modern English.
2. Have students explore additional data on the National Agricultural Statistics Service Web site, [www.usda.gov/nass/](http://www.usda.gov/nass/). Have them choose a region or agricultural commodity and write news releases or reports.
3. Have students design surveys gathering specific information about their school to share with someone from another school, state or country. After students gather the information, have them use it to write letters to the other schools. Have students present the information to local audiences in a variety of forms—charts, graphs, prose, oral presentations, etc.
4. Have students design surveys about the agriculture in another country. Make arrangements to connect with an overseas classroom via e-mail. Divide your class into two groups, and have one group correspond overseas via e-mail and another using traditional mail service. Compare the results. Discuss advantages and disadvantages of both means of communication.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Arthur Young and the President

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[Date]

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

It was nice to get your letter and to hear all about your school, your town and your friends. I loved the photos you sent of your family's camping trip. What a beautiful place!

It's always interesting to hear about life in your country. I hope I get to visit there someday. I would also love for you to come visit me. As you know, my family has a farm, and when I am not in school, I am usually helping with that.

What is farming like in your country? What kinds of crops grow there? Are there some crops that your country produces more than any other? How much is produced in a year? What kind of livestock do you raise? How much is it sold for? How much does farm land cost? Is it more expensive in certain parts of the country? Does the price stay the same, or does it go up and down from one year to the next?

As you can see, I have many questions. Thank you again for your letter. I look forward to hearing from you again.

Your Friend,  
Pat



# Farm Real Estate: Average Value per Acre, by Region and State, January 1, 1997-01

<u>State</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>
	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars
<b>NORTHEAST</b>	<b>2,240</b>	<b>2,280</b>	<b>2,370</b>	<b>2,520</b>	<b>2,640</b>
Connecticut	5,950	5,590	6,300	6,600	6,900
Delaware	2,580	2,660	2,750	2,800	2,830
Maine	1,170	1,190	1,200	1,250	1,300
Maryland	3,150	3,180	3,300	3,600	3,800
Massachusetts	5,150	5,120	5,500	5,900	6,000
New Hampshire	2,250	2,250	2,250	2,300	2,400
New Jersey	7,100	7,000	7,000	7,100	7,400
New York	1,250	1,280	1,340	1,410	1,500
Pennsylvania	2,300	2,390	2,500	2,720	2,840
Rhode Island	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,600	6,700
Vermont	1,500	1,520	1,570	1,650	1,750
<b>LAKE STATES</b>	<b>1,200</b>	<b>1,280</b>	<b>1,390</b>	<b>1,570</b>	<b>1,690</b>
Michigan	1,530	1,670	1,850	2,150	2,250
Minnesota	1,090	1,160	1,230	1,280	1,320
Wisconsin	1,170	1,240	1,370	1,700	2,000
<b>CORN BELT</b>	<b>1,610</b>	<b>1,730</b>	<b>1,830</b>	<b>1,930</b>	<b>2,020</b>
Illinois	1,980	2,130	2,250	2,380	2,450
Indiana	1,870	2,060	2,220	2,350	2,450
Iowa	1,600	1,700	1,770	1,820	1,860
Missouri	1,010	1,070	1,130	1,250	1,380
Ohio	1,890	2,040	2,220	2,300	2,400
<b>NORTHERN PLAINS</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>547</b>
Kansas	565	577	580	590	605
Nebraska	620	645	670	695	725
North Dakota	390	401	406	415	425
South Dakota	325	348	360	380	405
<b>APPALACHIAN</b>	<b>1,630</b>	<b>1,720</b>	<b>1,840</b>	<b>1,990</b>	<b>2,150</b>
Kentucky	1,350	1,450	1,530	1,600	1,770
North Carolina	2,000	2,080	2,250	2,500	2,800
Tennessee	1,650	1,810	1,950	2,150	2,240
Virginia	1,880	1,920	2,040	2,200	2,300
West Virginia	1,050	1,090	1,070	1,150	1,220
<b>SOUTHEAST</b>	<b>1,630</b>	<b>1,700</b>	<b>1,770</b>	<b>1,940</b>	<b>2,100</b>
Alabama	1,360	1,440	1,520	1,680	1,800
Florida	2,200	2,240	2,260	2,400	2,570
Georgia	1,430	1,510	1,630	1,880	2,100
South Carolina	1,400	1,480	1,520	1,600	1,650
<b>DELTA STATES</b>	<b>1,070</b>	<b>1,130</b>	<b>1,180</b>	<b>1,230</b>	<b>1,270</b>
Arkansas	1,070	1,150	1,220	1,250	1,300
Louisiana	1,190	1,210	1,210	1,250	1,270
Mississippi	980	1,050	1,100	1,180	1,220
<b>SOUTHERN PLAINS</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>640</b>
Oklahoma	570	610	625	634	640
Texas	554	593	610	630	640
<b>MOUNTAIN</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>486</b>
Arizona	920	987	1,070	1,180	1,300
Colorado	590	618	630	670	695
Idaho	960	1,020	1,090	1,170	1,210
Montana	291	294	296	350	375
Nevada	366	392	420	440	460
New Mexico	215	217	217	217	224
Utah	780	807	855	900	975
Wyoming	215	222	220	240	260
<b>PACIFIC</b>	<b>1,730</b>	<b>1,870</b>	<b>1,900</b>	<b>1,940</b>	
California	2,500	2,610	2,770	2,850	2,910
Oregon	960	960	1,000	1,020	1,050
Washington	1,160	1,190	1,190	1,200	1,190

Source: NASS, USDA

## Crop Summary: Production, United States, 2001

<u>Crop</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>2001</u>
GRAINS & HAY		Thousand
Barley	bushel	249,590
Corn for Grain	bushel	9,506,840
Corn for Silage	ton	102,352
Hay, All	ton	156,703
Oats	bushel	116,856
Proso Millet	bushel	19,250
Rice	cwt	213,045
Rye	bushel	6,971
Sorghum for Grain	bushel	514,524
Sorghum for Silage	ton	3,728
Wheat, All	bushel	1,957,643
OILSEEDS		
Canola	pound	1,998,515
Cottonseed	ton	7,452
Flaxseed	bushel	11,455
Mustard Seed	pound	41,106
Peanuts	pound	4,276,704
Rapeseed	pound	4,050
Safflower	pound	241,655
Soybeans for Beans	bushel	2,890,572
Sunflowers	pound	3,480,696
COTTON, TOBACCO & SUGAR CROPS		
Cotton, All	bale	20,303
Sugarbeets	ton	25,754
Sugarcane	ton	34,712
Tobacco	pound	991,519
DRY BEANS, PEAS & LENTILS		
Austrian Winter Peas	cwt	97
Dry Edible Beans	cwt	19,541
Dry Edible peas	cwt	3,779
Lentils	cwt	2,898
Wrinkled Seed Peas	cwt	640
POTATOES		
Coffee (Hawaii)	pound	7,600
Ginger Root (Hawaii)	pound	16,200
Hops	pound	66,832
Peppermint Oil	pound	6,343
Potatoes, All	cwt	444,766
Spearmint Oil	pound	2,052
Sweet Potatoes	cwt	14,355
Taro (Hawaii)	pound	6,400

Source: NASS, USDA

## Livestock: Average Prices Received by States, 2000

	Dollars per cwt		
	<u>Lambs</u>	<u>Hogs</u>	<u>Beef Cattle</u>
Alabama	79.10	39.50	70.00
Alaska	79.10	58.40	75.60
Arizona	75.00	45.60	68.60
Arkansas	79.10	39.10	65.40
California	74.80	44.10	50.00
Colorado	74.30	44.90	69.70
Connecticut	110.00	40.00	57.00
Delaware	79.10	37.30	67.90
Florida	79.10	35.40	48.20
Georgia	79.10	40.50	52.20
Hawaii	79.10	79.30	38.20
Idaho	70.30	45.00	63.10
Illinois	68.00	40.40	67.70
Indiana	71.30	40.10	57.10
Iowa	69.70	44.50	69.10
Kansas	75.60	40.60	71.70
Kentucky	79.10	40.20	71.90
Louisiana	79.10	35.10	51.60
Maine	110.00	40.00	65.00
Maryland	79.10	37.30	67.90
Massachusetts	110.00	40.00	56.00
Michigan	69.00	40.70	56.00
Minnesota	73.20	44.00	62.20
Mississippi	79.10	40.00	61.90
Missouri	75.00	38.90	76.00
Montana	76.80	39.80	78.20
Nebraska	72.50	44.30	69.20
Nevada	70.00	39.20	75.90
New Hampshire	110.00	40.00	62.00
New Jersey	79.10	35.00	42.00
New Mexico	75.00	37.60	67.80
New York	83.10	34.10	38.00
North Carolina	79.10	42.40	68.00
North Dakota	71.50	43.10	76.50
Ohio	73.70	41.30	67.10
Oklahoma	73.00	38.40	79.90
Oregon	66.90	47.00	70.50
Pennsylvania	81.10	38.80	59.90
Rhode Island	110.00	40.00	57.00
South Carolina	79.10	40.60	68.80
South Dakota	79.70	43.40	75.50
Tennessee	79.10	41.00	65.20
Texas	76.50	36.60	70.70
Utah	73.80	45.90	71.30
Vermont	110.00	40.00	63.00
Virginia	74.90	42.30	66.20
Washington	66.50	43.00	80.60
West Virginia	72.80	38.00	59.10
Wisconsin	70.40	37.60	51.40
Wyoming	75.70	41.00	81.50
U.S. Average	79.40	42.30	68.60

# Arthur Young and the President

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Back before telephones, e-mail and fax machines, people relied heavily on letters for sharing all kinds of information. The following are quotes from letters George Washington wrote to an English agriculturalist, Arthur Young, and others. Read the quotes, and then rewrite them in modern English, as though you were writing them to a friend today. Try to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words by reading them in context. Also notice the punctuation, capitalization and spelling that is different from what is considered correct today.

1. I have a prospect of introducing into this Country a very excellent race of animals also, by means of the liberality of the King of Spain. One of the Jacks which he was pleased to present to me (the other perished at sea) is about 15 hands high, his body and Limbs very large in proportion to his height; and the Mules which I have had from him appear to be extremely well formed for Service. I have likewise a Jack and two Jennets from Malta, of a very good size, which the Marquis de la Fayette sent to me. The Spanish Jack seems calculated to breed for heavy, slow draught; and the other for the Saddle or lighter carriages. From these, altogether, I hope to secure a race of extraordinary goodness, which will stock the Country. Their longevity and cheap keeping will be circumstances much in their favor. I am convinced, from the little experiments I have made with ordinary Mules, (which perform as much labor, with vastly less feeding than horses) that those of a superior quality will be of the best cattle we can employ for the harness. And indeed, in a few years, I intend to drive no other in my carriage: having appropriated for the sole purpose of breeding them, upwards of 20 of my best Mares.

George Washington  
(Letter to Arthur Young, December 4, 1788)

2. Every improvement in husbandry should be gratefully received and peculiarly fostered in this Country, not only as promoting the interests and lessening the labour of the farmer, but as advancing our respectability in a national point of view; for in the present State of America, our welfare and prosperity depend upon the cultivation of our lands and turning the produce of them to the best advantage.

George Washington  
(Letter to Samuel Chamberlain, April 3, 1788)





3. When I speak of a knowing farmer, I mean one who understands the best course of crops; how to plough, to sow, to mow, to hedge, to Ditch and above all, Midas like, one who can convert everything he touches into manure, as the first transmutation towards Gold; in a word one who can bring worn out and gullied lands into good tilth in the shortest time.

George Washington

(Letter to George William Fairfax, June 30, 1785)

4. To tell a farmer. . . that his Cattle & ca. Ought to be regularly penned in summer and secured from bad weather in winter, and the utmost attention paid to the making of manure for the improvement of his fields at both seasons; that his oxen should be well attended to, and kept in good and fit condition, thereby enabling them to perform the labor which they must undergo; to remind him of these things would, I say, be only observing what every Farmer must be thoroughly sensible of his duty enjoins...

George Washington

(Letter to William Pearce, September 23, 1793)

5. I think it would be no unsatisfactory experiment to fat one bullock altogether with Potatoes; another, altogether with Indian meal; and third with a mixture of both: keeping an exact account of the time they are fattening, and what is eaten of each, and of hay, by the different steers; that a judgement may be formed of the best and least expensive mode of stall feeding beef for market, or for my own use.

George Washington

(Letter to William Pearce, December 7, 1794)

6. No wheat that has ever yet fallen under my observation, exceeds the White which some years ago I cultivated extensively; but which, from inattention during my absence from home of almost nine years has got mixed or degenerated as scarcely to retain any of its original characteristic properties. But if the march of the Hessian Fly, Southerly, cannot be arrested. . .this White Wheat must yield the palm to the yellow bearded, which alone, it seems, is able to resist the depredations of that destructive insect. This makes your present of it to me more valuable. It shall be cultivated with care.

George Washington

(Letter to John Beale Bordley, August 17, 1788)

